

Somatic Patterning
Supplemental Instructor Materials
Chapter 5: The Patterning Process

Note: Numbered points in the chapter's reading list, objectives, and summary are correlated and focus on topics that I think will be most relevant for massage students.

Please contact your education director for answers to the chapter questions.

Chapter 5 Suggested Readings

1. Effort, Relaxation, pp. 120-121
2. Tone, pp. 121-124
3. Initiation and Sequencing, pp. 124-126
4. Breathing, p. 126, Respiratory Cycles, p. 130, The Respiratory Diaphragm as a Postural Stabilizer, pp. 130-132
5. Psychosomatic Patterns of Breathing, Paradoxical Breathing, Breathing as a Body-Centered Practice, pp. 132-133
6. The Temporomandibular Joint, pp. 133-135
7. Eye Movement, pp. 135-136
8. Equilibrium, Hearing, and the Ears, pp. 137-138

Chapter 5 Objectives

1. Discuss the need to monitor relaxation and effort levels during patterning exercises.
2. Explain what continuity of tone means and how to balance tone with somatic patterning.
3. List the steps in a movement sequence and describe importance of the initiation.
4. Describe healthy breathing patterns and holding patterns in breathing.
5. Describe diaphragmatic breathing and intra-abdominal pressure and their role in posture.
6. Discuss how emotional distress affects breathing.
7. Discuss how breathing promotes a body-centered awareness and practice.
8. Describe the unique attributes of the temporomandibular joint.
9. Describe how vision and eye movement affects patterns of the head, neck, and spine.
10. Identify equilibrium structures in the inner ear and how they affect balance and motion.

Chapter 5 Summary

1. It is important to monitor effort during patterning to use the least amount of effort possible, which will improve the efficiency of movement and release holding patterns. Efficient movement begins from a state of relaxation, which is why it is important to begin and end a patterning exercise in a relaxed state.
2. Continuity of tone means that the muscular tone throughout the body is relatively even and balanced. Tone can be balanced in a patterning exercise by alternating flexor with extensor movements and by actively increasing muscular contractions in low-tone areas while relaxing muscular tension in tight areas.
3. The stages of a movement sequence are pre-motor focus and planning, initiation, middle, end, and recuperation. The location of the initiation determines the pathway of the movement sequence. For example, to initiate a movement that sequences through the entire spine, a person needs to begin the action at either the head or the tail (coccyx).
4. Healthy breathing patterns can energize the body and promote healing; complete inhalation and exhalation cycles cause a subtle physiological flexion and extension in the entire spine. In contrast, respiratory holding patterns restrict breathing and rib motion, contribute to faulty postures and lead to inhalation fixations (marked by rigid, inflated thoracic holding) or exhalation fixations (marked by sunken, deflated thoracic holding).
5. Diaphragmatic breathing begins with contraction of the diaphragm, which causes the lateral expansion of the lower ribs. Inhalation then sequences into thoracic expansion, but only if intra-abdominal pressure (IAP) from the transversus abdominis contractions provides a counterforce to the downward movement of the diaphragm, which forces the rib cage to expand. As the ribs expand, they lift the chest and shoulders, providing an underlying breath support for upright posture.
6. Emotional distress can result in respiratory holding patterns, such as upper chest breathing or paradoxical breathing—a backwards pattern in which the diaphragm lifts on the inhalation rather than descends on the exhalation.
7. Focusing on breathing forces a person to tune into the present-moment experience of the body, which explains why observing the alternating expansion and relaxation of respiratory motion is a widely used body-centered meditation. In patterning, focusing on a full and long inhalation is practiced to energize the body; focusing on a slow exhalation is done to relax the body and release tension.
8. The temporomandibular joint (TMJ) is the first joint to develop in infants and it sets up a baseline for musculoskeletal symmetry. The TMJ is the most active joint in the body and it undergoes a lot of wear. People hold emotional tension in TMJ muscles, which compresses the disk, preventing it from sliding forwards and backwards as the mouth opens and closes. As a result, the TMJs are often dysfunctional and in pain.

9. The eyes are windows to the autonomic nervous system because they can carry easily observable stress patterns from visual strain, chronic tension, or unresolved traumas. Vision is central to hand-eye coordination, which initiates movements of the head and neck, and even the entire spine. Eye tracking exercises are used to improve hand-eye coordination, and to release stress and trauma from the autonomic nervous system.

10. Equilibrium structures in the inner ear are the vestibule, which adjusts tone to compensate for positional changes in the head, and the semicircular canals, which adjust tone to maintain balance whenever the body and head move into off-vertical positions.

Chapter 5 Questions

*Note: Make sure to pay attention to the italics in some of the questions because they ask you to identify the statement that **is not** found in or **does not** refer to the topic of the question.*

1. To relax muscular tension during a patterning exercise, a person needs to
 - a. reduce effort.
 - b. work harder.
 - c. breathe faster.
 - d. concentrate more.

2. Identify which statement *does not* describe continuity of tone.
 - a. It indicates a balance between flexor and extensor muscles.
 - b. It manifests as an even muscular tone throughout the body.
 - c. It supports symmetry between right and left sides.
 - d. It can be seen in high tone in the shoulders and low tone in the legs.

3. Every efficient and complete movement sequence has a
 - a. premotor focus, initiation, pathway of motion, completion, and recuperation phase.
 - b. tendency to blend into the next movement without a clear beginning or end.
 - c. starting point in the middle of the spine that only travels in one direction.
 - d. tendency to bypass certain areas of the body in incomplete chains of action.

4. What does a person focus on when practicing diaphragmatic breathing?
 - a. Breathing into the abdomen so that it distends.
 - b. Breathing into the upper ribs during the inhalation.
 - c. Breathing into the lateral expansion of the lower ribs.
 - d. Breathing out with a forced exhalation.

5. Identify which statement *does not* describe intra-abdominal pressure.
 - a. It is maintained by transversus abdominis muscle contraction.
 - b. It compresses the abdominal organs and provides postural support to the trunk.
 - c. It creates a counterforce to the downward movement of the diaphragm.
 - d. It is not necessary for normal diaphragmatic breathing.

6. Upper chest and paradoxical breathing often occur when
 - a. a person is doing deep belly breathing.
 - b. a person is traumatized or in emotional distress.
 - c. a person is relaxed and breathes with ease.
 - d. a person practices forced exhalation.

7. Which of the following statement *does not* describe the temporomandibular joint (TMJ)?
 - a. The TMJ is the most active joint in the body and frequently a source of pain.
 - b. The TMJ is the first joint to develop as the preborn sucks its thumb.
 - c. The TMJ has a disk that does not move when you open the mouth.

- d. The TMJ muscles tend to hold when a person is under emotional distress.
8. Which of the following statements *is not* true about vision?
- a. Visual tracking initiates hand-eye coordination.
 - b. Visual tracking often initiates head, neck, and spine rotation.
 - c. Emotional distress and trauma can cause holding patterns in the eyes.
 - d. The eyes should always move without head or neck movement.

Chapter 5 Suggested Learning Activities

Note: Any exercise titled “Patterning Exercise” can be found in the current edition. Page numbers for these exercises (inserted in parentheses) are included to help instructors utilize activities during lessons that may be based on other segments of the book. “Skills Exercises” are not found in the current edition but will be included in the 2nd edition of SP.

Patterning Exercise #28: Dealing with an Overactive Mind or Body (p. 119)

These activities can be done during any patterning exercise and can also be applied to body mechanics for massage.

Objectives:

- To gauge and reduce muscular effort during a patterning exercise.
- To relax the mind when patterning exercises become too mental.

Exercise:

1. *When your mind is overactive:* Give your mind a job to distract it, such as monitoring your breathing or repeating a suggestive word, like a mantra, over and over again, such as “relax, relax, relax,…” every time you notice your mind becoming controlling.
2. Shift what you are doing to an easy, automatic, and repetitive movement that does not require much thought, such as a fluid rocking or undulating movement.
3. Move in a slow, relaxed manner to minimize the effort and change your focus from moving to relaxing during motion.
4. *When your muscles are overworking:* Sense the muscular effort you are using, then move with only one-tenth of that perceived effort. Once you become aware of how much energy you are wasting in excessive effort, you can begin to gauge how much effort is actually needed and release the excess.
5. Take conscious control over an effort pattern by exaggerating the effort. Do so by going into your pattern, tightening up and contracting more muscles than you need to make a movement. Next, sense the increased energy you spend exaggerating the movement. Then release the excess effort. Exaggerate and release several times until increasing or decreasing your effort level becomes as natural as turning the volume controls on a radio.
6. If all else fail, drop the exercise and do something else to take your mind off it.

Patterning Exercise #38: Mobilizing the Spine with Breathing (p. 130)

Objectives:

- To loosen up the spine with more full and fluid breathing.
- To improve a body awareness of respiratory motion cycles along the spine.

Exercise: (10-20 minutes)

1. Lie on your back in a comfortable position. If your lower back is uncomfortable when your legs are straight, bend your knees and rest with both feet flat.

2. Inhale through your nose, from bottom to top. Allow your inhalation to fill first your pelvis, then your thorax, then your head. Allow the front of your spine to open and elongate.
3. Exhale through your mouth, relaxing your jaw. Allow the breath to drain out of your mouth, then your thorax, then your pelvis. Allow the back of your spine to sink and elongate as you exhale.
4. Continue to breathe, inhaling from bottom to top, exhaling from top to bottom. Imagine your breath like mercury in a thermometer, first rising, then falling. Allow each breath to fill and empty your entire spine.

Patterning Exercise # 82: Diaphragmatic Breathing (p. 228)

Objectives:

- To practice and improve diaphragmatic breathing.
- To learn a simple exercise that can be used for client education.

Exercise: (10 minutes)

1. Sit in a comfortable, upright position. Take in several deep breaths and notice what moves first (your abdominal wall, your lower ribs, your solar plexus, etc.).
2. Lightly contract your transversus abdominis in your lower abdominal area, below the navel, to increase intra-abdominal pressure and provide a counterforce to the downward movement of the diaphragm.
3. Place your hands around the sides and back of your lower ribs. As you inhale, actively contract your diaphragm by expanding your lower ribs into your hands. Make sure to expand the lower ribs in your back, as well, to move the back of your diaphragm. Then exhale and relax.
4. Continue to breathe like this until you feel you have an awareness of and control over contracting and relaxing your diaphragm muscle.
5. Get a partner and place your hands on the sides of your partner's lower ribs. Have your contract the lower abdominal muscles to increase intra-abdominal pressure. Then have your partner expand the lower ribs into your hands on the inhalation. Practice for several breath cycles, then switch roles.